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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 11 September 2017

[*without reference to a Main Committee* (A/71/L.86 *and Add.1*)]

71/328. Multilingualism

The General Assembly,

Recognizing that multilingualism, as a core value of the Organization, contributes to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations, as set out in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recognizing also that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally, as well as of improving the efficiency, performance and transparency of the Organization,

Recognizing further, in this regard, that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, tolerance and dialogue, and recognizing the importance of the capacity to communicate to the peoples of the world in their own languages, including in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, by contributing to the ownership and sustainability of the actions of the United Nations,

Stressing the need for strict observance of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the different bodies and organs of the United Nations,

Recalling that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are both the official and the working languages of the General Assembly, including its committees and subcommittees,[1] and of the Security Council,[2] that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the official languages and English, French and Spanish the working languages of the Economic and Social Council[3] and that English and French are the working languages of the Secretariat,[4]

Emphasizing the importance of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations,

[1] Rule 51 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

[2] Rule 41 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council.

[3] Rule 32 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council.

[4] See resolution 2 (I), annex.

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Recognizing the contribution of multilingualism in promoting international peace and security, development and human rights, through the work of the United Nations departments and offices,

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and reaffirming its unwavering commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda and utilizing it to transform our world for the better by 2030,

Recalling its resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, by which it adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[5] in particular article 27 thereof, concerning the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities,

Recalling also the decision taken by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 17 November 1999 that 21 February should be proclaimed International Mother Language Day,

Recalling further its resolutions 2 (I) of 1 February 1946, 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 42/207 C of 11 December 1987 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995 and other subsequent resolutions relating to multilingualism, including resolutions 69/324 of 11 September 2015, 71/101 A and B of 6 December 2016, 71/262 and 71/263 of 23 December 2016, 71/288 of 24 May 2017 and 71/314 of 19 July 2017,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;[6]

I

Multilingualism in general and the role of the Secretariat

2. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

3. *Underlines* the need for the full implementation of all resolutions establishing language arrangements for the official languages of the United Nations and the working languages of the Secretariat;

4. *Also underlines* the responsibility of the Secretariat in integrating multilingualism into its activities, from within existing resources, on an equitable basis;

5. *Notes* that the availability of United Nations documents in relevant official languages is limited in some areas of Secretariat activity, and therefore invites the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to implement, within existing resources, current multilingualism policies, in compliance with relevant rules and regulations;

6. *Notes in particular* that a high proportion of calls for bids are published only in English, and therefore encourages the Secretariat, where appropriate, to make use of existing multilingualism policies to facilitate the participation of local vendors in the United Nations procurement bidding process;

[5] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[6] A/71/757.

7. *Notes with concern* that the English version of the Procurement Manual is from July 2013 while the French and Spanish versions are from March 2010, and encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to ensure that the Procurement Manual is up to date;

8. *Welcomes* the appointment by the Secretary-General of the Coordinator for Multilingualism, who is responsible for the overall implementation of multilingualism Secretariat-wide, calls upon all departments and offices within the Secretariat to fully support the work of the Coordinator in the implementation of the relevant mandates on multilingualism, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon in his next report on multilingualism;

9. *Endorses* the terms of reference for the Coordinator for Multilingualism, as proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism;[7]

10. *Recalls* that the Secretary-General retains the authority to appoint a senior Secretariat official as the future Coordinator for Multilingualism, as first requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/64 of 6 December 1999;

11. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to continue to develop the network of focal points that supports the Coordinator for Multilingualism in effectively and consistently implementing relevant resolutions throughout all relevant departments and offices of the Secretariat, and invites the Secretary-General, through his role in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, if necessary by means of the development of a consistent policy framework, to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach on multilingualism within the United Nations system, taking into consideration the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on multilingualism;[8]

12. *Notes* the difficulties reported by departments and offices in compiling input for the report of the Secretary-General owing to the lack of disaggregated data by language, and encourages the Secretary-General to support the efforts of the Coordinator for Multilingualism to develop a template, where applicable, for collecting disaggregated data by language;

13. *Welcomes* the implementation, within the United Nations, of a day dedicated to each of the official languages in order to inform and raise awareness of their history, culture and use, encourages the Secretary-General to further strengthen this approach in a cost-neutral manner, if needed through the participation of partner organizations, including Member States and institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and also encourages the Secretary-General to consider extending this important initiative to other non-official languages spoken throughout the world;

14. *Also welcomes* the efforts made by international organizations based on a shared language to increase their cooperation with the United Nations regarding multilingualism;

15. *Further welcomes* the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Member States, entities of the United Nations system, other international organizations and all other participating bodies aimed at

[7] Ibid., annex II.

[8] A/67/78.

fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered ones, linguistic diversity and multilingualism;

16. *Reaffirms* that linguistic diversity is an important element of cultural diversity, stresses the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, [9] which entered into force on 18 March 2007, and recalls the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace of 15 October 2003;[10]

II

Role of the Department of Public Information in multilingualism

17. *Reaffirms* that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive, balanced, timely, relevant and multilingual information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency;

18. *Emphasizes* the importance of making use of all the official languages of the United Nations, ensuring their full and equitable treatment in all the activities of the Department of Public Information, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the use of the five other official languages, and in this regard reaffirms its request that the Secretary-General ensure that the Department has the necessary staffing capacity in all the official languages to undertake all its activities;

19. *Also emphasizes* the role of the Department of Public Information in building support for international peace and security, development and human rights for all and the contribution of multilingualism in achieving these goals;

20. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to enhance multilingualism in all its activities, and stresses the importance of ensuring that the texts of all new public United Nations documents in all six official languages, information materials and all older United Nations documents are made available through the United Nations websites and are accessible to Member States without delay;

21. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to use other languages in addition to the official languages, when appropriate, according to the targeted audience, with a view to reaching the widest possible spectrum of audiences and extending the United Nations message to all the corners of the world in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization;

22. *Welcomes* the work done by the network of United Nations information centres, including the United Nations Regional Information Centre, in favour of the publication of United Nations information materials and the translation of important documents into languages other than the official languages of the United Nations, encourages the information centres to continue their important multilingual activities

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[9] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2440, No. 43977.

[10] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-second Session, Paris, 29 September–17 October 2003*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. IV, resolution 41, annex.

in the interactive and proactive aspects of their work and to develop web pages in local languages, and the Department of Public Information to provide the necessary resources and technical facilities, with a view to reaching the widest possible spectrum of audiences and extending the United Nations message to all corners of the world in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization, and encourages the continuation of efforts in this regard;

23. *Emphasizes* the importance of the network of United Nations information centres in enhancing the public image of the United Nations, in disseminating messages on the United Nations to local populations, especially in developing countries, bearing in mind that information in local languages has the strongest impact on local populations, and in mobilizing support for the work of the United Nations at the local level;

24. *Welcomes* the sustained effort to disseminate information globally by the use of official and non-official languages and traditional means of communication, and in this regard expresses its particular appreciation for the work currently being carried out by United Nations Radio in the six official languages, as well as in non-official languages;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure that, in view of their income-generating nature, guided tours at United Nations Headquarters are consistently available in all six official languages of the United Nations;

26. *Welcomes* the initiative of the Secretary-General to also offer guided tours at United Nations Headquarters in non-official languages;

27. *Notes with interest* the cost-neutral initiatives of the Secretariat to produce publications in official and non-official languages, to increase the volume of translated publications and to encourage a multilingual acquisition policy for the libraries of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue those initiatives;

28. *Welcomes* the creation of the United Nations digital library, which provides multilingual content, and encourages the United Nations libraries to continue to take into consideration the importance of multilingualism in their activities;

29. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts of the Department of Public Information to work at the local level with other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to enhance the coordination of their communications activities, and urges the Department to encourage the United Nations Communications Group to promote linguistic diversity in its work;

30. *Recalls* paragraph 65 of its resolution 71/101 B, and encourages the Department of Public Information to prioritize the development of collaborative arrangements for the digitization of the audiovisual archives of the United Nations while preserving their multilingual character in a cost-neutral manner;

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations website and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, balanced, objective and equitable information in all official languages about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

III

Websites and other web-based communication tools

32. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations website is an essential tool for Member States, the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the general public;

33. *Also reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on all United Nations websites, welcomes in this regard the realization of the comprehensive review of the United Nations websites by the Secretary-General, including content discrepancies among the official languages, notes with appreciation the innovative ideas, potential synergies and other cost-neutral measures proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism[6] to achieve full parity among the six official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to present an updated version of the review in his next report;

34. *Welcomes* the realization of the comprehensive review of the United Nations websites by the Secretary-General, presenting the status of content in non-official languages, notes with appreciation the innovative ideas, potential synergies and other cost-neutral measures proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism to reinforce the broader multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations websites, as appropriate, and requests the Secretary-General to present an updated version of this review in his next report;

35. *Recalls* paragraph 29 of its resolution 69/324, notes with concern the disparity between the English and the non-English languages on the websites maintained by the Secretariat, urges the Secretary-General to lead the efforts of all offices and departments of the Secretariat to take concrete action to address such uneven development, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders, including the Department of Public Information, content-providing offices and departments, in particular the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the Secretariat, to continue their collaboration, within their respective mandates, so as to achieve full parity among the six official languages on all United Nations websites developed and maintained by all Secretariat entities, in full conformance with the principles of multilingualism and in compliance with the relevant resolutions addressing multilingualism and accessibility for persons with disabilities, by making every effort to translate materials currently available only in English and by providing offices and departments with technological solutions that comply with the principle of parity, from within existing resources;

36. *Urges* the Secretary-General to strengthen his efforts to develop, maintain and update multilingual United Nations websites and the web page of the Secretary-General in all the official languages of the United Nations, from within existing resources and on an equitable basis;

37. *Reaffirms its request* that the Secretary-General ensure, while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate website, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations website among all six official languages, with full respect for the needs and specificities of all six languages;

38. *Encourages* the continuation of the live webcasts of public meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and their respective subsidiary bodies, as well as of the public meetings of the Security Council, with interpretation services, and requests the Secretariat to make every effort to provide full access to archived videos in all official languages of all past open formal United

Nations meetings with interpretation services, in strict observance of the principle of full parity of the six official languages of the United Nations, in order to promote transparency and accountability within the Organization;

39. *Notes with concern* that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations website in certain official languages has improved at a much slower rate than expected, and in this regard requests the Department of Public Information, in coordination with content-providing offices, to advance actions to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website, in particular by expediting the filling of vacant posts in some sections;

40. *Takes note* of section III.A of the report of the Secretary-General, requests the Secretary-General to continue his ongoing efforts in this regard, and urges all content-providing offices in the Secretariat to strengthen their efforts to translate into all official languages all English-language materials and databases posted on the United Nations website in the most practical, efficient and cost-effective manner, from within existing resources;

41. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Office of Information and Communications Technology, to continue its efforts to ensure that technological infrastructures and supportive applications fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts in order to enhance the equality of all official languages on the United Nations website;

42. *Welcomes* the cooperative arrangements undertaken by the Department of Public Information with academic institutions to increase the number of web pages available in official and non-official languages, and requests the Secretary-General, in coordination with content-providing offices, to extend such cooperative arrangements, in a cost-effective manner, to all the official languages of the United Nations, bearing in mind the necessity of adherence to United Nations standards and guidelines;

43. *Underlines* the importance, in the implementation of new communication tools, such as social networks, of taking into account the linguistic dimension in order to assure full parity among the official languages of the Organization;

44. *Urges* the Secretariat to keep iSeek up to date in the two working languages of the Secretariat, to continue its efforts to implement iSeek at all duty stations and to develop and implement cost-neutral measures to provide Member States with secure access to the information currently accessible only on the Intranet of the Secretariat;

IV

Documentation and conference services

45. *Reiterates its request* that Secretary-General complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents to the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis so that those archives are also made available to Member States through that medium;

46. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure, through the provision of documentation services and meetings and publishing services under conference management, including high-quality translation and interpretation, effective multilingual communication equally in all the official languages of the United Nations among representatives of Member States in intergovernmental organs and among members of United Nations expert bodies;

47. *Reiterates with concern its request* that the Secretary-General ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all six official languages are strictly respected as regards both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in accordance with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000;

48. *Reiterates* the need to fully implement and observe rule 55 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which provides that, during the sessions of the Assembly, the *Journal of the United Nations* shall be published in the languages of the Assembly, from within existing resources;

49. *Underlines* that all the initiatives on the evolution of the working methods, including those introduced on a trial basis, shall comply with the principle of parity among the official languages of the Organization, with a view to preserving or enhancing the quality and scope of the services provided by the Secretariat;

V

Human resources management and staff training

50. *Recalls* its resolution 71/263, in particular paragraph 10 thereof, in which it reaffirmed the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat, reaffirmed the use of additional working languages in specific duty stations as mandated, and in that regard requested the Secretary-General to ensure that job openings specified the need for either of the working languages of the Secretariat, unless the functions of the post required a specific working language;

51. *Notes with satisfaction* the willingness of the Secretariat to encourage staff members, in meetings with interpretation services, to use any of the six official languages of which they have a command;

52. *Encourages* United Nations staff members to continue to actively use existing training facilities to acquire and enhance their proficiency in one or more of the official languages of the United Nations;

53. *Welcomes* the invitation of the Secretary-General to all the entities of the Secretariat to build an inventory of staff language skills, while making the best use of existing language databases, and encourages the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat to support these efforts, in collaboration with the Coordinator for Multilingualism, including by taking into account language skills in the implementation of the mobility policy, as requested in its resolution 69/324;

54. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue the efforts to ensure that training opportunities in the six official languages are equally available to all staff;

55. *Recalls* paragraph 11 of its resolution 71/263, in which it acknowledged that the interaction of the United Nations with the local population in the field was essential and that language skills constituted an important element of the selection and training processes and therefore affirmed that a good command of the official language(s) spoken in the country of residence should be taken into account as an additional asset during those processes;

56. *Also recalls* its resolution 68/265 of 9 April 2014 on the mobility framework, and invites the Secretary-General to take into account applicable language skills while ensuring full compliance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations;

57. *Invites* the Secretary-General to include in senior managers' compacts a managerial indicator related to multilingualism, which assures the issuance of official documentation to intergovernmental bodies and General Assembly committees in the six official languages, where applicable;

58. *Stresses* that the employment of staff shall continue to be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter and in line with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions;

59. *Notes with concern* that a number of recruitment handbooks developed by the Office of Human Resources Management are available only in English, and encourages the Secretary-General to ensure that upcoming reviews and updates, in particular those of the applicant's manual, are published simultaneously in the working languages;

60. *Invites* the Secretary-General to ensure compliance with the requirement for United Nations staff to have the ability to use one of the working languages of the Secretariat, and encourages the Secretary-General to further the implementation of resolution 2480 B (XXIII);

61. *Takes note* of the announcement of the forthcoming collaboration between the Coordinator for Multilingualism and the Office of Human Resources Management to assist in the development of guidelines supporting hiring managers in setting language requirements in job openings that meet the needs of the Organization;

62. *Also takes note* of the decision of the Management Committee to request the Office of Human Resources Management to review language skills assessment during the staff selection process, invites the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to consider the linguistic specificities mentioned in job openings during the composition of interview panels, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly;

63. *Invites* the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to consider the linguistic specificities mentioned in job openings during the composition of interview panels for the employment of United Nations staff;

64. *Stresses* that the promotion of staff in the Professional and higher categories shall be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter and in line with the provisions of resolution 2480 B (XXIII) and the relevant provisions of resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001;

VI

Language services staff

65. *Recalls* its resolution 66/233 of 24 December 2011, in particular paragraph 7 of section III thereof, reiterates its request that the Secretary-General ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages, and in that regard recalls section D, paragraph 11, of its resolution 54/248 of 23 December 1999;

66. *Acknowledges* the measures taken by the Secretary-General, in accordance with its resolutions, to address the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, and requests the Secretary-General to maintain and to intensify those efforts, including through the strengthening of cooperation with institutions that train language specialists to meet the needs in the six official languages of the United Nations;

VII

Multilingualism across the three pillars of the United Nations

67. *Notes* the work of the Secretary-General in making available multilingual information, technical assistance and training materials related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[11] and encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in this regard;

68. *Takes note* of the recommendations related to multilingualism contained in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations,[12] the subsequent report of the Secretary-General[13] and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture;[14]

69. *Recognizes* the contribution of the Language and Communications Programme to promoting multilingualism within the United Nations, encourages the Secretariat to continue to cooperate closely, from within existing resources, to support the language learning needs of staff in the field, and requests the Secretary-General to provide further information in this regard at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly;

70. *Stresses* the importance of proposing United Nations information, technical assistance and training materials, whenever possible, in the local languages of the beneficiary countries, including through locally based United Nations websites;

71. *Recalls* its resolution 71/314, in which it endorsed the proposals, recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations;[15]

72. *Takes note* of the ongoing initiatives outlined in the report of the Secretary-General related to field operations, requests the Secretary-General to continue his ongoing efforts in this regard, and recalls its resolution 66/297 of 17 September 2012 without prejudice to Article 101 of the Charter;

73. *Urges* the Secretariat to translate all peacekeeping training documents into the six official languages of the United Nations, from within existing resources, to enable and facilitate their use by all Member States, troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries, in particular, and by other involved institutions;

74. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session a comprehensive report on the full implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism;

75. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-third session the item entitled "Multilingualism".

97th plenary meeting
11 September 2017

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[11] Resolution 70/1.

[12] See A/70/95-S/2015/446.

[13] A/70/357-S/2015/682.

[14] See A/69/968-S/2015/490.

[15] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 19* (A/71/19), chap. V.